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CURBS BEING URGED ON DATA TO SOVIET

U.S. Officials Fear Unclassified Scientific Information May Help Russian Military

By PHILIP M. BOFFEY

High Pentagon and intelligence officials are urging that action be taken to stem the flow of unclassified scientific communication that might be of military value to the Soviet Union.

Their increasingly strong exhortations are causing concern among leading scientists who consider an unfettered exchange of ideas and information essential to the further progress of science and to American technological and military power.

Frank C. Carlucci, Deputy Secretary of Defense, recently warned the American Association for the Advancement of Science that "the Soviets exploit scientific exchanges as well as a variety of other means in a highly orchestrated, centrally directed effort aimed at gathering the technical information required to enhance their military posture."

In a letter published in last week's issue of the association's journal, Science, he voiced concern over the disclosure of sensitive information through exchanges of scholars and students, joint conferences, publication of articles in the open scientific journals and the Government's own depositories of technical data.

Failure to Provide Data

Mr. Carlucci said the exchange of information under bilateral agreement was often "one-sided," with the Soviet Union acquiring information from the United States but failing to provide data requested in return.

He also said the Russians were "misusing" an exchange program for young scholars. He said the United States was sending young students, mostly in the humanities, while the Soviet Union was sending senior technical people, some from military institutions.

Mr. Carlucci said Soviet exchange scientists were often involved in applied military research. As an example, he cited the case of a Soviet scientist who studied "the technology of fuel-air explosives" at a leading American university in 1976-77, under the tutelage of a professor who consulted on such devices for the Navy.

He said the Russian also ordered numerous documents pertaining to fuel-air explosives from the National Technical Information Service, an unclassified technical depository operated by the Commerce Department. Then, Mr. Carlucci said, "he returned to his work in the U.S.S.R. developing fuel air explosive weapons."

Pentagon Is 'Alarmed'

Mr. Carlucci offered no suggestions on what should be done, and his office said he did not wish to amplify his letter. In the letter, he said that the Defense Department "views with alarm" such "blatant and persistent attempts" to shun away militarily useful information and believes it is "possible to inhibit this flow without infringing upon legitimate scientific discourse."

Adm. Bobby R. Inman, Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, went a step further in a speech to the science association's annual meeting in Washington last week.

He suggested that a voluntary system might be needed in which national security agencies could have some voice in reviewing research proposals before funds were provided and in examining research results before they were published. He expressed particular concern over "computer hardware and software, other electronic gear and techniques, lasers, crop projections, and manufacturing procedures."

Admiral Inman later said in a telephone interview he was expressing a personal opinion, and not the agency's views. He said he was not concerned about any areas of basic research, the kind of research that academic scientists are most involved in, but he was concerned about some fields of applied research and technology.

Pressure for Curbs

Government officials have long sought to curb the export of devices and technical plans that can quickly be applied to military or industrial purposes.

In recent years, the Government has also sought to stem the flow of sensitive scientific information and ideas. Under

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will not let the matter rest.

He said that Mr. Carlucci's "letter focused mainly on half a dozen bad cases, including some exchanges that were discontinued because they were so one-sided" and that "he barely touched on the problems of the open literature and international conferences."

Frank Press, president of the National Academy of Sciences and former science adviser to President Carter, said that official exchange programs were of mutual benefit, not one-sided, and that individual scholarly exchanges few scientists. "The big leakage is in the trade journals and the open literature, and we're not going to stop that," he said. "It's the price we pay for a free society."

Marvin L. Goldberger, president of the California Institute of Technology, said he would "go slowly" on restricting the exchange of knowledge or ideas. He said such restrictions simply drive the best scientists away from doing important research.